Per- and Polyfluoroalkylated Substances (PFAS): EPA Activities

SUMMARY

EPA is working with federal partners, states, tribes, communities, and industry to address public concerns related to PFAS chemicals, including PFOS and PFOA. PFAS have been detected at sites across the country. There have also been known, or suspected, contamination issues with at least 75 Department of Defense (DoD) Federal Facility National Priority List (NPL) sites, as well as other regional locations.

The public is concerned about:

- The nature and extent of exposure to PFAS chemicals;
- The potential human health effects that PFAS exposures could impart, particularly on the fetus and young children;
- What the government is doing to remediate and reduce contamination levels in their environment.

States, tribes, and local governments are concerned about:

- The wide variety of PFAS chemicals with limited hazard information, including the potential cumulative hazard for multiple PFAS chemicals;
- The environmental persistence of PFAS chemicals;
- The limited information as to the occurrence of PFAS in the environment due to the lack of validated analytical methods, and laboratory capacity.

CURRENT STATUS AND ISSUES

EPA is working to address concerns by:

- Ensuring safety and review of pre-market alternatives for PFOA and PFOS in EPA's New Chemical program (OCSPP).
- Proposing a Significant New Use Rule (SNUR) on January 21, 2015, that requires manufacturers (including importers) and processors of PFAS chemicals to notify EPA at least 90 days before starting or resuming new uses of the chemicals in any products (OCSPP).
- Actively engaging in PFAS clean-up processes at Federal Facility National Priority List (NPL) sites (OLEM).
- Conducting research on the potential hazards of PFAS in the environment using computational toxicology modeling (ORD).
- Publishing health advisories in 2016 for PFOA and PFOS for states and tribes to consider when addressing drinking water contamination (OW).
- Working across the Agency and with states, tribes, local and federal partners to address concerns of PFAS contamination of public water systems, private drinking water wells, and legacy contamination at Superfund sites (Regions).
- Developing and validating analytical methods to accurately measure PFAS compounds in water and soil (Cross-Agency).
- Characterizing human health hazards of PFAS chemicals and developing quantitative toxicity values for use in Agency decision-making (Cross-Agency).
- Developing data quality guidelines for analytical methods (Cross-Agency).

EPA is working to address these concerns; however, challenges remain, including:

- The lack of information that hampers our ability to determine clean up levels;
- The need for health levels for PFAS chemicals that can be applied nationally, to provide consistency for states, tribes, and industry across the country;
- Legal issues regarding responsible parties;
- The rapid rate with which new PFAS chemicals are entering the market and environment.
- The need for tools available for remediation; and
- The need to communicate whether there are potential risks to the public.